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The Logic of Faith*

by CECIL DEBOER (1898-1955)**

Of the many attempts nowadays to make religious faith intellectually respectable, one of the most interesting is the argument that inasmuch as religion and science are matters of practical certainty, the logic of religious faith and that of scientific belief are the same. Scientific belief concerns "this or that theory as to how certain sensibly perceived data" are related. In the course of many verifications such a theory becomes clothed with a "truth probability" on the basis of which we feel justified in believing it. This is known as *practical* certainty, in distinction from *theoretical* certainty, where our belief is said to be based either on self-evidence or on "proof." However, where the truth probability of a theory is fairly high, theoretical uncertainty is regarded either as irrelevant or as purely academic.

Religious faith, like scientific faith, we are told, is a species of practical uncertainty. Men gather data from nature and from revelation and relate them by means of a concept of God which "commands their highest faith and their deepest loyalty." From then on it is simply a matter of "ongoing experience." In the course of acting upon such a concept of God men receive sufficient verification to enable them to claim a knowledge of God which, although partial, may be said to have a high degree of truth probability. The consequences that verify this partial knowledge must, of course, be "sensibly perceivable." We may not include, for example, the mystic's claim of a non-perceptive awareness of God's presence, nor the convert's testimony concerning experiences of exaltation and fulfilment. Such claims have no value as evidence unless they are translated into action or otherwise lead to consequences observable by others and evaluated by them in intelligible terms. Not that such experiences are necessarily unreliable, but since the sceptic can interpret them in terms of auto-hypnosis and social contagion, they can never function as primary evidence. Genuine knowledge of God must take the form of sharable experience based upon sensibly perceived data and verified by sensibly perceived consequences.

The original data of the Christian religion are perceivable events such as the words and the works of Jesus, who supplemented His teaching by nature-controlling signs in keeping with His exalted character. The unusual nature of those works testifies to the operation of causal factors transcending the ordinary course of nature. We believe that He arose from the grave because of the sensibly perceived empty tomb, the grave clothes, and His many appearances to the disciples as a "sensibly recognized person" bearing the scars of the crucifixion.[1] And what are the sensibly perceived consequences that verify the content of this religion? The answer is that commitment to its truth has produced noble lives and a free

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* The theme of the present discussion is taken from the familiar definition of faith stated in Hebrews, chapter 11: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (C. de B.).

** Dr. Cecil DeBoer, late Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College and Editor of the *Calvin Forum*, died suddenly on November 28, 1955 from the effects of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. As teacher and writer he significantly influenced the entire Reformed community, and his passing impoverished it no little. In this issue the *Journal* presents to its readers one of the last pieces composed by Professor DeBoer, as well as a number of utterances excerpted from his writings and assembled under the head of *Echoes*. There also appear in these pages four brief accounts, by various writers, of Professor DeBoer as *Man, Writer, Teacher,* and *Philosopher*.

1. "Except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I shall not believe" — after rebuking the sceptical Thomas for demanding "sensibly perceived data," Jesus added this: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And that seems unfortunate for the theory of the logic of faith we are just now reviewing.

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The Logic of Faith — Continued

and just "social order builded into the Kingdom of God on earth." History vindicates the logic of Jesus — "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Living is largely a matter of attitudes, and the faith we live by determines the way we live. Belief in God and in prayer replaces a life of fear, jealousy, and greed with one of courage and brotherly love. And the by-products of that kind of life are such profitable things as normal personality development and the habit of success. In fact we may say that in terms of by-products the "Kingdom of God is health, happiness, power, vitality, strength, beauty, glory, and every other wonderful thing that is inside each of us."[2]

* * *

ADMITTING whatever of truth this doctrine may contain, it seems a bit too glib for comfort. Furthermore, about the worst thing a propagator of the faith — any faith — can do is to commend his religion by pointing to the virtues and comforts of the believers and the vices and discomforts of the unbelivers. The goodness of the believers is always fragmentary, and the sins of the unbelievers are not as consistently black as some believers like to think. Jesus' life was made miserable by the complacent and the fanatically righteous, not by the carnally minded unrighteous. After all, the only thing that can render both the righteous and the unrighteous presentable to God is the "sorrow that leadeth to repentance." Although the Christian religion recognizes a distinction between the godly and the ungodly, it also recognizes the ungodly as redeemable, and the godly as daily in need of forgiveness. As for the existence of free and happy societies as a verification of Christian truth, we need observe only this. No one acquainted with the history of the West can doubt that some of its sorriest chapters concern repression and violence on the part of religious authoritarianism — torture and liquidation in the name of Christ and for the salvation of souls.[3] The godly tend to forget the admonition, "Not by might, nor by power, but by Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."[4] On the other hand, those who demand verification of the Christian religion in terms of the results of those who reject it, forget the words of our Lord when he said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." They forget too that the results which verify the truth of the Christian religion must always remain to some extent incomprehensible to those with the will to disbelieve. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" — to assume that these verifying fruits are for the most part to be found in the dimension of things approved by the men of the world is to overlook the fact that the Christian religion begins and ends, not with the convenience of men, but with the will of God.[5]

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THAT SCIENCE and religion have a number of things in common is doubtless interesting, but one can easily make too much of it. Naturally, faith without knowledge is cut off from the real world because it is intellectually blind; just as science without faith is cut off from the real world because it is pure theory. Again, both science and religion may be said to begin with a tentative and exploratory attitude in the realm of partial knowledge, and to end with relative familiarity (Acts 17:11). Finally, in religion, as in science, faith may at certain stages be regarded as knowledge in the process of becoming, and knowledge, as faith verified by experience. These similarities do not, however, fundamentally alter the fact that there is a significant difference between the kind of faith associated with science and the kind associated with religion. Thus, whereas scientific faith concerns the hoped for *intelligibility of the physical environment*, religious faith has to do with the hoped for *goodness of the universe as a whole*. Now verifying the goodness of the universe would seem to call for procedures somewhat different from those involved in verifying the intelligibility of that fragment of the physical environment which the physical sciences have disclosed. For one thing, verifying the goodness of the universe seems to involve something uniquely human, namely, the fact that fallible men can *intend* their own perfection. In religion, for example, men reach out to something or someone in order to find something — or to be given something — that will complement their own partial experience. In so doing they presuppose the existence of what philosophers have called a sufficient cause. Thus men committed to the Christian religion accept what more they need from God who, by taking on human nature, exemplifies in history the reality of perfected manhood. The principle of sufficient cause is invoked

2. From the Gospel according to Norman Vincent Peale.

3. Father Joseph, in Huxley's *Grey Eminence*, is an example of how the Christian religion can be corrupted by a genuine religious mystic spiritually motivated. For when that motivation issued in French policy it became something demonic, resulting in the massacres, famine, and pestilence of the Thirty Years War, a war which reduced the population of central Europe by one third. Father Joseph, for all his spirituality, seems to have retained sufficient carnality to reduce mysticism to a species of fanaticism, a fanaticism which made both himself and the murdered thousands the victims of the illusion that a truly human community can be achieved by force.

4. Religious purism, for example, seems peculiarly vulnerable to the spirit of the Sanhedrin.

5. That is not to deny the contemporary relevance of the Gospel. In fact it seems unlikely that without the Christian faith (as something produced in men by the Divine initiative) the dignity of the individual can in the long run be asserted against the claims of an encroaching state. "The kingdom of God is within you" — that to the devout is something more real than anything in space and time. As a doctrine it proclaims that there is a moral authority which no state may exert. And as a fact it is the only thing on earth that can consistently defy tyranny.

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because of recognized imperfections and a recognized dependence. In religion men are remade, and that is a process which presupposes the initiative of the object of worship. Accordingly, if the religious function is at all real, i.e., if it is something to be taken seriously, then the reality of its proper environment can hardly be denied without also denying enough rationality in the universe to make science possible. Anyway, men do not long believe in a God who does nothing. The Christian, faith, for example, is a living faith only when those committed to it discover that sin and suffering cannot ultimately dominate them. For that reason faith is defined as the "power of God unto salvation." A philospher once asked the question, Is the universe friendly? The Christian religion offers the answer given long ago to another question — "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The answer was, "Come and see."

Accordingly, for the Christian religion the verification of the goodness of the universe involves this important question: Is there such a thing as the experience of what the New Testament calls a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power"? Obviously, a scientific experiment here would be both irrelevant and impossible, since the experimenter would have to be the believer himself. As a believer, however, he could hardly function as an experimentalist except by becoming a pretender, in which case a demonstration of the Spirit and of power would forever escape him. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonas (Luke 11:29). In other words, the critical intelligence, to be relevant, must be exercised within the totality of the religious life itself.

Where it is so exercised it does not hesitate to affirm the "mystery of godliness" as indeed a mystery. This mystery, to be sure, involves the more ultimate mysteries of the incarnation and the resurrection; but it also involves such unspectacular things as the "witness of the Spirit with our spirit," the "indwelling of Christ," the "peace of God," "joy in the Holy Ghost," together with such unheroic accompaniments as humility, meekness, charity, forgiveness, "enduring all things," and "rejoicing in good." These things appear to be indispensable to any one assuming responsibility, as the Christian does, for tasks beyond unaided human achievement.[6] Human beings, so it seems, can participate in God's power, as they can in His freedom and in His holiness, provided they can put up with the "foolishness of God which is wiser than men," and with the "weakness of God which is stronger than men."[7]

However, these verifying consequences, these evidences of the goodness of the universe, come only in the course of a venture to which a man is committed with his entire being, a venture representing an experience which no man can give to another. For here we are beyond anything verifiable merely in terms of "sensibly perceived data." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."[8] For the believer faith is the "evidence of things not seen" because he finds himself committed in spite of himself. The portrait of Christ in the gospels either reproves of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment or it does not. No human power, whether of science, or of philosophy, or of moral earnestness can compel the "sorrow that leadeth to repentence." Here we can only acknowledge — or simply deny — the fact of the Divine initiative.

* * *

It is characteristic of human beings to intend wholeness in their more or less disordered lives, and to hunger after the eternal morning with its adventure and gladness. In this they reflect, as we have noted, the ability to *intend* their own perfection. It seems, however, that men have somehow been designed to achieve this perfection only by way of obedience to some principle of idealism in the world, and to learn the art of obedience by way of the consciousness of dependence. This appears to be so much at the root of all that is human that those who refuse it may almost certainly expect moral disaster, since the only thing left to them is some form of indulgence of the will to power.[9] And if political history teaches anything it is that the crimes of dictators are explicable only by a kind of insanity which seizes those who may command but themselves go uncommanded. "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

We are told by students of comparative religion that the higher the idea of God, the stronger man's desire to leave himself in God's hands; and that, conversely, the lower that idea, the stronger man's desire to manipulate God. In the latter case it is, in fact, difficult to distinguish religion from superstition, with its rites, gifts, sacrifices, and offices for the purpose of changing God's mind. Christianity, on the other hand, is most emphatic in its teaching that not God but man is the being who needs to be changed. For that reason it designates worship as the "ministry of reconciliation." Although the ultimate end of the Gospel is the glory of God, its proximate end is the forming of the good man. The Gospel involves, so to speak, a Divine theory of the race; and only where that theory is verified by the "sorrow that leadeth to repentance" do we find the Kingdom of God on earth. One cannot do much good in the world by talking or speculating about the meaning of life; to do any good one must somehow possess that meaning. In other words, the prob-

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6. In fact, a "thorn in the flesh" once proved necessary to the success of a mission which eventuated in the conquest of an empire — "My grace is sufficint for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

7. Men of the world understand and respect such things as health, the habit of success, vitality, and glory well enough. The Greeks had a similar, although somewhat more dignified list of virtues, viz., wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. However, the early Christians seem to have regarded them as at best incomplete and at worst profane. Thus for the Greek virtue of courage they substituted that of absolute confidence in God, an excellence of which the virtue of courage was at best an attendant phenomenon. Likewise wisdom, justice, and temperance were viewed by them as secondary qualities, qualities indirectly occasioned by such transcendent manifestations of the Spirit as love, holiness, a passion for righteousness, and the "fear of the Lord." The fundamental difference between these two sets of virtues lies, of course, in the fact that the latter are God-centered.

Walter Lippmann once said that "things endure in human affairs when they are made not of pride and power but of humility and the love of truth."

8. The unbeliever will tend to interpret any genuine demonstration of the Spirit and of power — assuming him to pay any attention to it at all — as merely a function of the "will to believe," something on the same footing morally with the will to disbelieve. The force of Christian testimony and Christian example will frequently, therefore, be lost upon the man of the world, if only by reason of sheer blindness to their relevance with regard to the realities of life as he understands them.

9. And that means almost total frustration for at least ninety-five percent of the population. Hence the rich harvests of the psychiatrists and the writers of pot boilers on how to make friends and influence people, how to acquire the habit of success, how to think your way to the top — in a word, how to indulge all the enervated forms of the will to power.

The Logic of Faith — Continued

lem of the meaning of life seems to be one that must be handled on a level beyond that on which the critical intelligence operates. "What good things shall I do that I may have eternal life?" The answer is, "Keep the commandments and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." The meaning of life is something *given* to men only in the course of active obedience to life's fundamental demands. This is the methodology not only of sane human living but also, and particularly, of true religion. Significantly the gospels add the words, "And come and follow me."

* * *

IT SEEMS extremely doubtful that fundamental moral and spiritual problems can be solved by the critical intelligence operating on the level of scientific and philosophic theory. Take for example the age-old problem of the freedom of the will. On the level of critical theory the question is, If man is a proper object of scientific inquiry, an inquiry presupposing determinism, how can we think of him as a responsible agent, something presupposing freedom? Evidently, the terms *freedom* and *determinism* can be given such a variety of meanings as to baffle the human mind in its attempt to discover a synthesizing concept doing justice to both terms and to the facts. The problem is not solved, therefore, by scientific or philosophic argument. Rather it is *dissolved* as the result of an act of faith; that is to say, by taking morality and, therefore, human responsibility serously, we find that we can largely *determine* the attitudes and behavior of normal people simply by *holding* them responsible. That being the case, moral responsibility is evidently a defining characteristic of human beings. Accordingly, the question as to whether man is a free agent becomes irrelevant. Heredity, environment, disease, degree of temptation, and so on may modify the normal person's responsibility, but they cannot annul it. And by himself acting on the commitment that he *is* responsible, somewhere along the path of duty and experience a man receives — as a gift — the wisdom, the insight, and the artistry that go into the thing we call character.

The Christian religion verifies the hoped for goodness of the universe by handling the problem of evil in an analogous way. From the point of view of the critical intelligence evil is something which ought not to be and yet is. The history of philosophy — and theology — seems to show that the problem cannot be solved on the level of scientific and philosophical analysis.[10] Christian practice, i.e. the "mystery of godliness," on the other hand, functioning on the level of what Kant might have called the practical reason, dissolves the problem by an act of faith in which the believer accepts the paradox that evil has already been overcome (not necessarily annihilated), so that he can live with it in the assurance that, although it may plague him, it can never destroy him. By taking seriously the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as historical facts signifying the ultimacy of a principle of idealism in the world, a principle which guarantees that life can be made worth while and even magnificent, he discovers that his attitudes and his behavior are determined by a consciousness of life renewed. The question, therefore, of what evil is or why it is becomes at once irrelevant. Sin and suffering may now and then modify the believer's "assurance of faith," but they can never take it away. Acting upon the commitment that goodness and mercy are in the midst of us here and now because evil has been overcome, somewhere along the path of faith, duty, and prayer the unprofitable servant receives the assurance — as a gift — that he belongs to the household of God.[11]

Religion is neither established nor refuted by the critical intelligence functioning on the level of theoretical speculation. In contrast with verifying the intelligibility of the physical environment, verifying the goodness of the universe can never take the form of a public demonstration in terms of "sensibly perceivable data." Verifying the goodness of the universe is an operation involving an act of God. It is this unique factor, this Divine initiative, that constitutes the "evidence of things not seen.." Because of this unique factor that evidence can be withheld from the wise and the prudent, and "revealed unto babes."

10. Thinkers in their struggle with the problem have only succeeded in showing considerable ingenuity in finding synonyms for the word evil — e. g., "absurdity," "nothingness," "God's non-willing," "God's left hand" (Barth), "tension," "negation," and so on.

11. "If a man will *do* his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

The Man

by JESSE DEBOER*

IT WAS quite fitting that on Monday, November 28, two people in Grand Rapids should send me by 'phone the news that on that day Cecil De Boer had passed away. They knew that he and I were very close friends. The news was wholly unexpected. Twice during the past summer we had spent some time together, first in June and then near the middle of August. On the latter occasion we spent two mornings together, driving in his car to two of the excellent parks maintained by Kent County, and talking busily as we walked about in the beauty and vitality of God's world. For a long time I had known that Cecil was compelled to guard his health, but there was no sign in August that the end was approaching. He was vigorous in speech and mind, as cheerful as ever, and looking forward to the new year of academic work. So it was with shattering suddenness that I lost for the time being one of my dearest friends. Yet I soon realized, remembering Cecil's firmness in the faith and his tendency to keep himself occupied and active, that the sort of end which came to him was exactly such as he would have chosen if he had been given a choice.

I am thankful that we saw each other twice during his last year. During the period of our acquaintance, which lasted a full fifteen years, this happened only rarely. I do not remember when I first met Cecil; it was either near the end of my period of teaching at Calvin College (1939) or after I had spent a

* Dr. DeBoer is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky.

year at Harvard. Perhaps the disturbance of my personal affairs by the War and the developments in my family have clouded my memory. At any rate, I first got to know him on Ridgemoor golf course, where he caught up with me on the ninth hole. Thereafter we played frequently together during summer vacations until the War took me in tow; we both needed the exercise, we both enjoyed the outdoors, we both had a passion for philosophy and for getting clear on the function and task of the philosopher who is first a Christian man. After the War we began to correspond and occasionally we could arrange to meet; our meetings could occur only when our vacation periods concided and we would both be in Grand Rapids. Going through the letters he wrote me, I am struck by the fact that from 1946 to 1950 we rarely managed to meet, owing to the fact that Cecil would have to be in Arkansas or Idaho by the time I could get to Grand Rapids. After 1950 this became easier, and I saw him at least once, I believe, each summer.

Since the War ended I knew that Cecil was lonely and in rather precarious health. Once he told me that he lost the companionship of some of his early friends after they had assumed family responsibilities. I am happy that I could be something of an exception. I never was conscious of trying to be unselfish, but his letters indicate that he longed for the kind of company we could share. As for his health, I knew that a hot climate sickened him — that the Arkansas heat wore on him cruelly. Some factor in his constitution made him incapable of enduring heat. Then, in Idaho, he was dangerously sick and no doubt weakened. I remember how, when we were golfing on a fairly fresh day, and a light rain began, Cecil told me that he had to rush home to change to dry clothes, or else he might catch his death of cold. I drove him back in haste, with the car heater working, and later he said in humorous exaggeration, "Jesse, you saved my life that time." Yet, after a spell of severe heat last summer he seemed to be enjoying what for him would be good health and was quite fit for the opening of work at the college.

Cecil was orderly and methodical in his habits. If he said to me that he would call for me at 9:00 A.M., I could count on his being there on the dot. I am positive that his classes did not have to wait for him five or eight minutes after the class hour was to start. He made sharp appointments and kept them; it was characteristic of him to avoid being an inconvenience to anyone; and no doubt he had to tolerate the rather less careful performances of others. I am sure too that in class he scrupulously avoided passing the time of day with irrelevant small talk, with which a teacher sometimes conceals his faulty preparation. Cecil did not enter on a performance without having gotten himself as prepared for it as he was able. Consider the remarkable command of thought and the unusual economy of expression in his *Forum* editorials. He was not, however, a humorless person, a martinet. On one occasion, when a poorly read and impatient student presumed to speak critically of a philosopher before he had managed to understand him, Cecil told the student that the question at issue was, of course, technical, and that it is normal in such a case for experts to disagree. He had a lively sense of humor, and while he knew how to use it to prick bubbles of pretension, most often it was used to throw a patch of light on the human situation, not to affect a particular person.

His fundamental commitment was that of the Christian believer. He strove to use his gifts and training in Christian service. At one time he contemplated going into religious journalism or mission work. He had a clear sense of the fact that as recipients of God's speech to man he and the uneducated believer were on exactly the same plane. More clearly than several educated people of this generation, including people brought up in a Christian environment, he realized that, while philosophy is a specialized discipline with a special work to do in the complex of civilized living, it does not provide a truth, or a way to truth, superior to the Christian faith. The philosopher does not know anything substantial which the simple believer does not know. In this field Cecil was a tough and honest mind. He did not pursue a Gnostic will-of-the-wisp, the fantastic hope of turning faith into some knowledge which is better than faith. He did not look for occasions to celebrate the specious success of a scientist in making faith more plausible, even nearly scientific; nor did he mistake the faith for an acquired facility in runing up and down the scales of a logical system of propositions. Further, his own personal faith was genuine and honest in that he did not confuse it with conforming to the mores of a highly special community, in which it is easier to act as if one has faith than in other situations: he knew, I am sure, that when virtue begins to pay it may not long be virtue. It is likely that his sojourn for over twenty years away from Christian Reformed people was beneficial to his thinking, helping him to see and cleave to what is essential to Reformed Christianity. Certainly it stirred him to exert himself for the exposition and defense of Christian belief. This aim, I believe, was dominant in his life and personality. And it is to him as a worker for Christ, using his skill in behalf of our Lord, that I wish to give my tribute, even if my words are weak and wandering.

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The Teacher

by F. VAN HALSEMA*

PROFESSOR DE BOER liked to walk in the woods, and I have a feeling that it was in such a place, in the neighborhood of Mark Hopkins' proverbial log, that the teacher would have liked to meet his pupils. His whole demeanor as a teacher made one sense that the modern classroom had become, for him, too much a professional salon. I doubt whether he would have felt at home at an annual teachers' convention. Memory of him as a teacher brings back little of classroom environment and liturgy (only the cigar in the window sill and the drone of the roll call being perfunctorily taken), and nothing of methods, of strategy, of quizzes and tests, of calculated care about student reaction, of police action on student delinquency — nothing of a professionalized educator. It returns rather the gentlemanliness and wisdom of a man.

While pretending no reverence for the prescribed etiquette of professional pedagogy, Professor De Boer loved right decorum. He respected his students, and expected them to respect him. He was as intolerant of discourteous performance as he was impatient of dowdy thinking. He was averse to the mentality of both the "peasant" and the pedant, not because he was a bigot, but because they were champions of "provincial" improprieties he found incompatible with humility. Every confusion of punctilio with precision, mores with morals, he resented. If this was a prejudice with him, it was one learned, in part at least, from the Gospels, to whose accounts of Christ-embarrassed Pharisees he delighted to refer. Professor De Boer was a gentleman of rather obsolete vintage — not what the English called "genteel," but the kind the French called "honnete": rich in probity.

As a man of science and philosophy, Professor De Boer had a characteristic jealousy for the truth. He was eager to vindicate the theoretical pursuit of knowledge and to defend the non-utilitarian birthright of science. (In one of his slanted asides — he was a master at them — he remarked that "those who study only what they consider useful generally end up by studying nothing at all"; in another, "Only if a man is ignorant does he despise knowledge.") He denied, however, that such theoretical pursuit existed self-sufficiently and independently with its end in itself. Philosophy for him was a matter of wisdom, and both in class and in *Forum* he displayed his sensitivity to the unity of truth and of life. For him any philosophy, for example, which was irrelevant to politics was bad philosophy.

This wisdom's concern for the truth set him against all travesties of it. It was not very common to leave a class session in which some reductionism had not been exposed. He beheld as grotesque both the attempts of some contemporary theologians, physicists, and psychologists to talk philosophy, and the misdirected efforts of too many contemporary philosophers to talk theology, physics, and psychology. (He never seemed to tire of joking about the psychologism of philosophy in the "average state university.") He saw no place in the scientific enterprise for the self-styled crusader, and recognized meekness as a prime condition for admission into it.

Professor De Boer once suggested, after inspecting an overstuffed manuscript intended for publication, that the number and kind of footnotes a person used revealed something about him. The same can be said, I believe, of one's parentheses. One reason why professor De Boer's classes were never dull was his parenthetical explanation and commentary, which, when not fascinating, was always interesting. A wisdom's respect for unity was in it. Although there was an abundance of it, often elicited by student questions asked about the lectures he read, his classes were never mere "bull sessions" or holidays for tangent excursions; they were an hour, not of footnotes, but of variations on one theme. As his ideal essay had a minimum of irrelevancies in footnotes and a maximum of pertinent sidelights in the text, so his classes covered wide and diverse territories without anybody getting either lost or travel-sick.

It is worth comparing Professor De Boer with three of the men of whom he often made parenthetical mention in his lectures: Bertrand Russell, G. K. Chesterton, and W. R. Inge. These three were respectable or better writers; like them, Professor De Boer wrote well, and the body of written expression he left behind can be called an achievement. Like Russell, he was the hard foe of all messianic philosophers and all system builders; and, as was very plain from his lectures in the Philosophy of Science, he possessed a mind well-suited to and well-trained in the mathematico-physical setting of recent philosophy. He had the cool, clear perception of a Chesterton, quick to discern where the sophomore ends and where the saint begins, and ready with wit and reason to concede nothing to unbelief but the devil's option. Like Inge, he found ecclesiasticism suffocating, and answered the absurd with satire (two things, as he said, you can't disprove: the truth and absurdity). They are wrong, however, who suppose that he was as disillusioned as the Dean was gloomy. Shattered dreams often make for clearer visions, and it is probable that Professor De Boer's vision of Christ had a clarity too clear for us who not always understand him.

He was not the kind to listen twice to anything so strident as Russell's naturalism. He did not disregard it, however, for it and its philosophical companion pieces bothered him as parts of a generally apostate culture. That apostasy frightened him, but also strengthened his evangelical zeal. He was anxious about a need, not for more of Chesterton's omnipresent priests, but for a more vigorous mission and a more powerful pulpit. The heart of the teacher and the man is recorded nowhere better than in the brevity, force, and fervor of one of his editorial titles: "We'd Better Pray."

Professor De Boer was an admirer of the music of Brahms. By one of those aweful coincidences, that Sunday evening of November 27 some of us were listening to Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Epitaphs speak to the living, not to the dead; and a better epitaph there is not:

> Herr, lehre doch mich, dass ein Ende mit mir haben muss, und mein Leben ein Ziel hat, und ich davon muss....
> Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herrn sterben von nun an.

---

* Mr. Van Halsema is a senior student at Calvin Seminary.

The Philosopher

by HENRY STOB

CECIL DEBOER was a teacher of philosophy. But he was more than that. He was a Philosopher. The distinction is worth noting, for a man may undertake to teach philosophy without himself engaging in the philosophic quest or attaining the philosophic mind. A man may undertake to tell what influential thinkers have declared without sharing their inquiring spirit or joining their pursuit. He may stand outside them and attempt, as a mere spectator, to describe their behavior, and never himself become one of them. He may, in short, be a mere historian of the philosophic community and not himself a living member of it.

This was not the case with Cecil DeBoer. He was numbered among the philosophers. He did not merely talk about philosophers: he philosophized. Now a man who philosophizes does at least two things. In the first place, he joins the company of all others who philosophize; he joins the company of the world's philosophers. Cecil DeBoer did this. I do not say that he took first rank among them, though he was a giant in their land. I only say that he joined them in a common quest and thus in some real sense identified himself with them. This identification laid in him a bond of sympathy with sincere inquirers of every school. He discerned and appreciated, as was right, the bond of humanity and history that tied him to all who walked the philosophic way. Cecil DeBoer belonged to a universal and authentically human movement, the movement of philosophy.

But - and this in the second place - precisely because he was a philosopher among philosophers, and not a mere external observer of them, he maintained within the universal community of thinkers an independent mind and judgment. Had he been a mere outsider he could not have maintained his independent judgment. An outsider, not himself actively philosophizing and not, in consequence, a member of the philosophic community, can only describe, not judge philosophers. None can pass sound judgment upon philosophy who is not himself within it. Cecil DeBoer was really within it - and he judged it. He was part of it, and he raised himself above it with the help of principles not discovered but revealed.

He therefore represented in his person both the continuity and the discontinuity of Christian thought with all thought whatsoever. He knew that it was not by withdrawal from, but only through cooperation with, all other thinkers in the history of thought that he could articulate the Christian philosophical idea. It was by immersing himself in and learning from the global tradition that he could be, and was, distinctive. Only by tying himself with innumerable ties to the historical development of philosophic thought could he exercise in scientific fashion a Christian freedom from its errors.

Cecil DeBoer was therefore neither a disparager nor a worshipper of human culture. The historical precipitate of human knowledge was to him neither Nothing nor Everything. He regarded the wisdom of the race neither as unqualified Foolishness nor as unqualified Truth. He could neither repudiate it in toto, nor embrace it as final. In this he manifested an authentic Christian mind, In this he exhibited his status as a man at once Christian and Philosopher.

* * *

AS A CHRISTIAN philosopher Cecil DeBoer had analyzed the perennial problem of faith and reason and come to clarity on it. He left no doubt as to where he stood. He was an avowed Fideist. He held Reason to be the servant of Faith, and all theoretical thought to be controlled by a basic religious commitment. He recognized and proclaimed that in constructing a philosophy it is the perspective within which the facts are viewed, and not the mere facts in isolation, that is determinative: "...science without faith is cut off from the real world," he said; and "...the critical intelligence, to be relevant, must be exercised within the totality of the religious life itself." He had an eye for what may be called the transcendental factor in all theoretical activity; he recognized the role played by the Subject or Self in all philosophical construction. He consequently affirmed the antithesis with all his heart. "The antithesis between the Christian way of life and non-Christian ways," he said, "can hardly be exaggerated."

This important and characteristically Christian emphasis on faith and subjectivity did not blind Cecil DeBoer to the elements of reason and objectivity which also go to make up science and philosophy. He was never tempted to deny the reality of the created cosmos and the objectivity of facts. He held the world to be a datum constraining our thought and not a construct formed by our thought. He despised Idealism. Convinced by Christian teaching that created things have a nature and activity of their own, he deplored "the practice of ignoring the actuality of secondary causes." He wished every thinker to subject his intelligence to the formative power of created existences, and to recognize the authority of facts. Basic assumptions, he recognized, affect facts in many ways, but they do not change them. Facts are and always remain distinguishable from the interpretative context in which, in any concrete instance, they are inserted. As God's revelation in nature they form an indispensable point of reference for human judgment: "...if a human being, believer or unbeliever, wishes to gain true knowledge of a tree or a bar of iron in terms of secondary causes, he must submit his thinking to the objective existence of these things and their qualities as God has established them."

Recognizing the authority and constraining power of facts, and observing that sin has not completely destroyed man as a bearer of God's image, Cecil DeBoer was impatient with those who suggested, or seemed to suggest, that the non-Christian could know nothing about created reality. He denied that ability to apprehend truth was limited to the regenerated, or dependent upon a man's affirming that God exists. Knowledge, he held, is not a monopoly of Christians: "the unbeliever is not as a rule so out of touch with reality as to cease being a man made in the image of God;" and "anybody wishing to demonstrate, say, a theorem in geometry can obviously do so without postulating the existence of God." In all this Cecil DeBoer was quite correct and in the very center of the Christian tradition. He discerned, morever, that there is nothing in such assertions to threaten the uniqueness and finality of Christian

The Philosopher — Continued

truth, for there are degrees of knowledge and levels of truth: ". . . truth is a transcendential idea, and . . . its unity is only a unity of analogy; . . . truth is different as it is applied to different realms."

* * *

CECIL DEBOER'S Christian Fideism engendered in him a strong and usually wholesome anti-rationalism. This anti-rationalism led him, like Augustinians generally, to disparage System: "... only the foolhardy," he said, "will try their hand at a complete integration and system building." He was especially opposed to any attempt to use God, his nature and his attributes, as a premiss for the construction, by mere logic, of a philosophy of reality. He deplored what he regarded as the tendency of some "to talk about God as though He were the ultimate presupposition ... of a deductive system." One may not think reality "after the analogy of a ... system of propositions." The relation of God to the created universe may not be reduced to a purely logical relation, for thereby one "reduces the Deity to a part of a system of which creation is also a part." His Realism came here to the aid of his Fideism. An *a priori* construction is bound, he believed, to subvert facts, to force and wrench those that submit reluctantly to logical manipulation, and to ignore or deny those that refuse altogether to be laid upon the procrustean bed of a preconceived system.

Cecil DeBoer was impatient, too, with any and every attempt to prove the mysteries of the Christian faith. No philosophy or apologetic, he believed, can make a demonstration of Christian truth, and it is folly to undertake it. He was himself for the larger part of his life a staunch proponent of orthodox Christianity on the campuses of secular universities, and his witness to Christ was unfailing. But he learned early in his career that it was not by theoretical arguments, but only by the demonstration of the Spirit's power, that the foolishness of the cross came to be recognized by men as God's highest wisdom. He had little sympathy, therefore, for any apologetic which presumed to be able, by philosophical arguments, to cut all ground from under the unbeliever's feet. "Religion," he said, "is neither established nor refuted by the critical intelligence functioning on the level of theoretical speculation." Himself a critical thinker, nothing scandalized him more than a bad argument for a good cause: ". . . a bad argument for the truth," he was wont to say, "does more damage than a good argument against it." As his article in this issue of the *Journal* makes very plain, he believed that "the problem of the meaning of life ... must be handled on a level beyond that on which the critical intelligence operates." The problems of Evil and Freedom, for instance, cannot be solved "on the level of scientific and philosophical analysis," but only on the level of moral obedience and spiritual surrender. It is only in the course of "a venture to which a man is committed with his entire being" to God in Christ that the meaning of life discloses itself to a man.

* * *

Now Cecil DeBoer has gone. Calvin College and the whole Christian philosophic effort is the poorer for his going. But he himself is richer, for he was in Christ, and in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom towards which he bent his entire life.

The Journalist

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

A COLLEAGUE states in a nearby column that Cecil DeBoer once thought of evangelical journalism as a career. One guesses that if he had entered upon such a career he would have been very successful. There was an evangelist in him; indeed, he lived his life in the spirit of a phrase he liked to quote, namely, "Evangelize or die." And there was a journalist in him, unmistakably. He had a gift for writing, and for writing of precisely the kind which is best called journalism. He could take his thought, which had matured in the leisure of private reflection, and could bring it to bear with immediacy and directness upon the current issue and the timely topic.

We have developed few such journalists in our community, and our want of Cecil DeBoer is therefore the greater. We are a talking and listening rather than a writing and reading people. The talent of our leadership runs to the rostrum and pulpit rather more than to the book and the article. For Cecil De Boer it was just the other way around. True, he did well at the lectern also, whether in the classroom or on the platform. But the public address was not his *metier*. His lectures, always totally worked out and never left open to the risk of extempore development, were oral essays, really. Writing was his special province. Indeed, one hazards the guess that, had journalism in a considerable way been practically available to him, it would have been his first love, and teaching only his second.

One of the resources in Cecil DeBoer that would have fitted him admirably for a career in evangelical journalism was his strong interest in Christian apology. He liked to explore the possibilities and limitations of philosophical apologetics; he judged that Catholics made too much of rational demonstration and Fundamentalists too little, though his own accent also fell upon the limitations. He was, both naturally and by force of circumstance — the circumstance, namely, that he had long taught at state universities — a hard student of good and bad ways for the Christian to make his defence of the faith among learned people. Having lived outside of the professing Christian community for a good while, and having been impressed by the definitive difference between Christians and non-Christians, he could not, upon his return to that community, understand why varying Christians within it should be so concerned to define their differences. He was thinking of those others on the outside, and of the paramount work of witness to them.

This man's outside experience served him well in his *Forum* writing. It enhanced the value of his own Reformed convictions. It gave him an appreciative understanding of the problems and efforts of fellow-Christians outside the Reformed pale. It habituated him to always providing a content and

meaning for terms which, inside the group, are easily assumed to be clearly and richly understood. It divested his style and diction of the aura of the provincial and the ecclesiatically inbred. It helped him to see us as others see us, to be an occasional spectator as well as a participant, and to remain correspondingly humble. And, most significantly, perhaps, his outside experience gave his *Forum* contributions a vivid sense of what he liked to call the *actual realities* of the modern situation.

It is one of the major accomplishments of the *Calvin Forum* in its last decade that it brought Cecil DeBoer out. True, he had written before also. He had, for instance, contributed a piece to *The Monist* in October, 1932, entitled "On the Nature of State Action in Punishment," and he had published his textbook of ethics in 1936. But it was to the *Forum*, and to that only in the last eight years, that he gave a considerable sequence of editorials, articles, and reviews. In the end these amounted, if not to a massive output, at least to a representative image of his mind. There is enough in those files of the *Forum* since 1947, when his first article appeared in it, to rescue from loss, and to preserve for further use, an impressively honest, earned, and important Reformed interpretation of faith and life.[1]

In some of his articles, Cecil DeBoer addressed himself to problems properly and theoretically philosophical. Thus, in 1947, he wrote of "The Relation between Christian and Philosophic Ethics" and of "Christian Morality and Contemporary Ethical Theories." A couple of years later he joined in contributing to a symposium on the question, "Was Calvin a Philosopher?" In 1951 he gave some account in a review of Spier's *Inleiding* of the Philosophy of the Idea of Law, and he returned to this subject in part, this time more thoroughly, later in the same year, writing under the caption, "The Spirit of Catholic and Calvinistic Philosophy." To this category belong also his "John Dewey" of 1952 and his last piece, "Science and Irreligion," of October last. What we got from him on these subjects, and on related themes, was not so much wide reading, or depth of learning, as it was mature reflection, and a characteristically determined "no-nonsense" attitude towards extravagant philosophic claims, whether put forth by idealist, positivist, or Calvinist thinkers.

Most of his work, however, brought the fruits of his thought to bear upon practical life, and might be subsumed under the heading, Essays in Applied Philosophy. He had now, reluctantly, and mumbling something in Churchill's phrase about being asked to preside over the demise of *The Forum*, become editor of that paper, and, apparently with some planned forethought, had undertaken to explore the areas of science, the social order, and education. The last two, especially, drew him out. On the social order he gave us a more complete perspective than any we have had in this country from a Reformed vantage point, writing, as he did on such themes as:

Moral Requisites of Peace
Christian Social and Political Action
America As World Leader
Calvinistic Action and the Realities in America
Contemporary Catholic Action
Factors in the Race Problem
The Separation of Church and State
Sources of Danger to a Free Society
Labor and Industrial Democracy
The Church and Labor Unions

On education too, although on this subject others were also writing often and well, he conducted some penetrating discussions. What fascinated him most in this subject was the problem of whether the state can educate religiously, and whether religious education *which is not education in a particular religion* is any good at all.

Happily it belongs to us all together and not any one of us alone to reflect on what the life and work of Cecil DeBoer has meant. Personal opinions about this ought to be diffidently ventured and not pressed too hard. But perhaps one personal thought about it may be thus diffidently put forward. There was a conviction, or near-conviction, which stuck deep in him. He implied it often and spoke of it expressly in two of his *Forum* pieces in 1951, the first on "Calvinistic Action and the Realities in America" and the second on "The Sickness of Modern Man." It was the conviction or near-conviction that modern society had corporately rejected Christianity. This sin unto death tended to be for him part and parcel of the *realities* of the modern situation. It made him melancholy about the possibilities, and passive about the actuation, of Christian programs for cultural and social change. Indeed, he construed Christian Action as a call to the Christian to "be in an attitude of prayer always and everywhere," to "function as the conscience of the nation," to engage in "priestly behavior," to enter upon "an earned cultivation of personal godliness," and "to witness to the truth."

Shakespeare's Hamlet, having taken a full look at the *realities* of the rottenness in Denmark, returns from his appalling colloquy with the ghost, and says

> . . .Every man has business and desire Such as it is; and for mine own poor part, Look you, I'll go pray.

Cecil De Boer was such an one also. It was a mistake to say that he might have been an evangelical journalist. It is better to say that he *was* one.

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Echoes*

"No Christian objects to admitting ignorance . . . ."

* * *

"It seems to me that the apostolic admonition, that we be able to give a good account of the faith that is in us, would today involve at least some acquaintance with the so-called Bible difficulties and their resolution."

* * *

". . . It is my impression that the only philosopher who could possibly claim to be completely logical would be one, who, aware of all the problems and difficulties and paradoxes involved in any philosophy, had decided not to open his mouth."

* * *

"Calvinism in action would seem just a bit silly if it did not include the winning of souls. The expression "Evangelize or die" is one for which at least some of us have of late acquired considerable respect."

* * *

"Jesus tells us, at least by implication, that the great destroyer of true religion is not necessarily agnosticism, nor even atheism, but the reliance on wealth and things."

* * *

"In pondering what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says in Chapter VI about the sin unto death, one is inclined to wonder whether there is such a thing as the sin unto death committed by groups as well as by individuals, *i.e.*, a collective, corporate sin unto death. Thus when Christendom seems bogged down, as in our day, when it has apparently lost its effective leavening power, so that it has virtually ceased to function as a significant influence upon the course of human affairs over wide areas within a civilization, one cannot but wonder whether this signifies the final falling away, the corporate sinning unto death of that civilization. For history seems to indicate that whenever something like that happens, there is no return, no second chance, no forgiveness. Something else takes the place of Christendom, something inferior, often something in the nature of a caricature of Christianity, and always something with a devastating finality about it. And the result is a spiritual perversion so thoroughoing and so entrenched that no amount of subsequent missionary endeavor seems able to dislodge it."

* * *

"The antagonism of today's secular intellectual . . . reflects a civilization which has known the Christian way of life and has rejected it; a civilization which has transformed itself into a wholly secular culture, and which in so doing may have committed a corporate sin unto death. As a result, its antagonism is that of men who by contact and rejection have virtually achieved an immunity to the gospel . . . ."

* * *

"The right of property is this that God willed it as the means to the moral and religious education involved in stewardship."

* * *

"There is, after all, such a thing as irresponsible intolerance, something closely akin to self-righteousness."

* * *

". . . American Calvinism's most conspicuous shortcoming, namely, a lack of evangelistic zeal."

* * *

"It is simply a fact that in the matter of evangelism such Christians as Methodists, Baptists, Nazarenes, and so on have left the Calvinistic groups in America disgracefully far behind."

* * *

"We all realize by this time, let us hope, that the ambition to duplicate in America the kind of thing that occcurred in the Netherlands in the days of Kuyper and others is entirely futile, and that there is no good reason why as American Christians we should waste our time regretting it. God's satisfaction in his creative and redemptive work was doubtless quite as great when the early Christians took to the catacombs as when a Gladstone or a Kuyper sat in a prime minister's chair."

* * *

"We may as well get used to the ancient truth that in terms of the rewards of this world 'the price of goodness is failure.' "

* * *

"The love of Christ celebrated its triumph in part in his miracles of healing; and in all of them he stressed the truth that the spiritual healing of individuals, groups, and nations consists in an exxperience of the love of God, and that it is this experience only which can lead to the moral renewal of the world."

* * *

"Religion-in-general as the means to saving the democratic way of life would seem to be about as efficacious as patriotism-in-general as a means to saving a particular nation. No more than you can have the high feeling of patriotism unless you love a particular country can you have the assurance of faith unless you implicitly believe a particular religion."

* * *

". . . Although it is true that the Christian educator has the mandate to see God everywhere, it is also true that the explanation of man and the universe in which he lives places him within an area of study so utterly difficult and complex that only the foolhardy will try their hand at a complete integration and system building."

* * *

". . .Although we should always be ready, as the apostle says, to defend the faith, we should never forget that a poor argument for the faith will usually do more damage than a good argument against it. We should not try to do the impossible. If we do try, we may find ourselves in the embarrassing position of proving either nothing at all or altogether too much."

* * *

". . .Whenever you and I as Christians, that is to say, as missionaries, have occasion to approach the contemporary man of the world, the best opening wedge would seem to be something like this. Accept him for what he is, try to be his friend, and then say to him: 'Look here, my boy; what you seem to need very badly is the love of God." That in itself will not, of course, convert him, but you will be surprised at the change in his tone of voice."

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* These utterances of Cecil De Boer were excerpted from *The Calvin Forum* with permission.

Toward a Calvin University

by W. HARRY JELLEMA

IN THE THINKING of an earlier eneration, a Calvin University was rgently necessary, and it was feasible. ut the idea of a university has since ecome so complicated by argument nd by wrong assumption and apparent ilemma, that we of the present genera- ion have lost the sense of urgency, nuch of the sense of need, and almost ll sense of realizability. A Calvin niversity, aye; fine idea, maybe; but or the present too big a thing, and too omplicated by all sorts of problems; vait another fifty years. —

I submit, on the contrary, that the eed is urgent, and that the first steps oward realizing the ideal can be taken *ight now*. The whole issue of a Calvin- stic university, with all its apparently xtenuating complications, can be re- uced to a simple and forthright chal- nge, the challenge right now, *at our entennial*, to establish a Calvin Insti- ute of Advanced Studies.

* * *

A CALVIN duplicate of Har- ard or of the University of Chicago to e called into existence over night by he simple magic of calling the thing by nother name? Not at all. Names and words will not magically produce a niversity, as we should certainly have earned by now. Rather, establishing n Institute would mean that we had re- urned to the essence of the matter, ad once more got hold of the proper otion of what it is that makes a uni- ersity, and were laying the proper oundation for the teaching of graduate ourses, should we wish to undertake r continue such.

But then, too, the Institute itself hould be established in the right way. The Institute need not be of imposing roportions, nor need it be wealthy. ts beginnings can be very modest. But ts beginning must be right.

My intention in the present article is o indicate in broad outline certain eatures of organization which I con- eive to be essential if such an Institute s to get off to a right start; further, to suggest the kind of significant work hat even a very modest Institute could erform; and then to comment on the question of financing.

* * *

FIRST, THEN, as to organization. The general plan of organization should be such as to be fair to each of the two principal aspects of an Institute (or of a university). There is the academic aspect, or the aspect of scholarship; and the plan of organization must be such as to insure high quality on the scientific side and within the framework of Calvinistic thinking. The other side is the supporting constituency; and the organization must be of such character as to safeguard the rights and intentions of those who establish and maintain the Institute.

Begin with the latter aspect. Since the Institute ought to be distinct from College and Seminary, and ought not to be ecclesiastical, an *Association* for maintaining such an Institute should be formed. The Association would in reality be the incorporator of the Institute. To protect its rights, it would elect its *Board of Trustees*. These would act as trustees of the assets, tangible and intangible, of the Association, would concern themselves directly with promotion, finance, and business generally, would also receive and take final action on suggestions and reports and recommendations as they came from the academic side of the Institute, etc. In short, though it would have ultimate veto power with reference to the academic, the Board of Trustees would not exercise immediate supervision of the more strictly academic side.

To guarantee that in all matters academic the Institute gets off to a right start, the best and also the most feasible way is to ask the faculties of College and Seminary to elect from among their number six or seven who in the judgment of their colleagues are by training, experience, insight, etc., best qualified to constitute a nuclear academic *Senate*, on a "part time" basis. More loosely they may be thought of as the "Faculty." This nuclear senate would recommend for appointment additional senate members and associates as needed. The Senate would determine academic policy, set standards, direct studies, etc., and when occasion arose recommend for appointment teachers, research fellows, etc. In short, direct responsibility for piloting the Institute and, later, a "teaching university," as academic and scholarly institution, would rest with the Senate. It is most important, therefore, that the nucleus of this senate be rightly selected. And I submit the method suggested as being, all in all, the best.

The Senate should be under the immediate supervision of a *Board of Overseers*, itself responsible and ultimately subordinate to the Board of Trustees of the Association, but independently elected. In order to insure that Overseers are capable of discharging their responsibility, they should be selected not to represent the geographical distribution of our people, nor for their uncommon business ability, nor simply because of an "interest" in advanced studies, but because they are Calvinists of disciplined vision and judgment in matters of scholarship and in matters academic. I conceive that this Board of Overseers would consist of some of the ablest of our men in various fields, — law, medicine, theology, etc. One method of election would be that of having bodies like the Association itself, the academic Senate, the Calvin Alumni Association, the Synod or Curatorium, each elect one; nor need any such electoral body in its choice restrict itself to its own membership.

An Association with its Board of Trustees to watch over the interests and rights of the supporting constituency, and to have ultimate authority; a Senate and a Board of Overseers to have more immediate responsibility for the academic; — such is also the general pattern of organization of the Free University of Amsterdam. And if neither the academic interests nor the interests of the supporting constituency are to be violated, such must, I think, be the pattern for the Institute.

* * *

BUT SUPPOSE that we did so get the Institute off to a proper start, what work could it undertake? Would we not have to wait another fifty years before anything significant could be accomplished?

Indeed, is not an Institute such as is proposed merely a way of postponing a Calvin University? Take the constant demand by teachers and principles in our Christian school system who would

Toward a Calvin University — Continued

like to take work leading to a Master's degree in education; take the demand for graduate work in theology; ought we not rather address ourselves at once to such needs?

Well, that is one reason why we should properly organize the Institute. We ought not to permit, nor ought we to have permitted, graduate work in any field simply to grow like Topsy. The College should not, for example, extend itself a bit, offer a few extra courses, set its own standards (or simply copy other school catalogs), and then announce a Master's degree in education, or in whatever. Nor should the Seminary. Graduate degrees, if any are to be given, ought to be respectable degrees. They should be earned under the auspices of a Graduate School. And the planning of graduate work that would be of scholarly grade and would implement Calvinism, would be an item on the agenda of the Senate of the Institute.

At least as important is a related matter. If there is to be Calvinistic teaching of graduate courses, there should be opportunity for such men as are going to teach them to prepare themselves and the material. That opportunity could be provided by the Institute. Its Senate could arrange and direct seminars of and for such prospective teaching staff, as one division of the "factory" of Calvinistic scholarship.

In short, let the Institute at its beginning be even more modestly proportioned than it need be; one significant piece of work it can immediately accomplish is that of laying the necessary groundwork for a "teaching" university. To organize an Institute is also exactly to address ourselves to the need and demand for graduate studies in education or in theology.

But I should not like to have the fact forgotten that if we had the Institute we should already have the substance of a university. For, quite apart from "teaching," a university is made by a corporation of scholars engaged in productive research; and, however modestly, the Institute could from the very beginning engage in such activity. Items of this character on its agenda will be obvious to the academic Senate. Activity of this kind is limited only by finance and by availability of competent scholars.

* * *

GRANTED that such a Calvin Institute of Advanced Studies should be established, and that it could at once begin significant work, can it be financed? True, there would be an Association, but in order to provide a broad base, its minimum membership dues should be kept low. Must we not still say, "Fine idea, maybe; but for the present too big a thing?"

By way of reply, just a comment or two. One advantage of the Institute is that it is a "factory." Like many a factory of tangibles, it, too, can adjust its initial ventures to the capital on hand.

Besides, at the beginning, the Senate of the Institute could consist entirely of individuals who are teachers at College or Seminary. Minimum expense could be held down to cost of reimbursement of Calvin College and Seminary for time taken by these men from their regular teaching duties i and when necessary, and to cost o secretarial help. So much is minimum but such minimum would already per mit important work to get under way And so much is a matter at most of few thousand dollars annually, mainl for reimbursement if required. No need we at any time commit ourselve to any more than we believe we ca foreseeably afford.

AT THE beginning I stated tha the whole complicated issue of uni versity could be reduced to a simpl challenge to our generation, the cha lenge right now to establish a Calvi Institute of Advanced Studies. Let m now add that the challenge is als simple to meet. Let an Association fo creating and maintaining the Institut be organized, electing its Board o Trustees. Let the Association reques the faculties of Calvin and Seminar to elect from their number the nuclea Senate, it to begin at once to serve a a committee which will draft constitu tion and plans for the Institute, thes to be submitted to and discussed wit the Board. When plans have bee approved by the Association, the Inst tute can be incorporated, Overseer elected, and the Institute can get t work.

* * *

We can have a Calvin Institute fo Advanced Studies, and thus we ca have the very essence of a Calvin Un versity, before the end of the centennia year. And I know of no worthier wa in which we could, by way of a center nial project, indicate that the heritag left us by former generations is als meaningful to us.

"Reluctantly Endured"

by EDWARD BOSSENBROEK

THE title of this article is a term used by John Calvin. This prince of Bible scholars uses it in connection with polygamy in the New Testament Church. According to Calvin, though the law of God condemns polygamy as sin yet the early church "reluctantly endured" this serious social disorder among its lay members coming from paganism. The evidence for this statement he finds in I Tim. 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6. Paul, giving the qualifications for elders and deacons, states three times that each should be "the husband of one wife." Some of Calvin's comments on I Tim. 3:2 are very significant. We quote: ". . . The only true exposition, therefore, is that of Chrysostom, that in a bishop he expressly condemns polygamy, which at that time the Jews almost reckoned to be lawful. . . . But here it might be objected, that what is sin ful in all ought not to have been con demned or forbidden in bishops alone The answer is easy. When it is ex pressly prohibited to bishops, it doe not therefore follow that it is freel allowed to others. Beyond all doub Paul condemned universally what wa contrary to an unrepealed law of God for it is a settled enactment, 'They shal be one flesh.' (Gen. 2:24) But h might, to some extent, bear with tha

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others which, in a bishop, would ıve been excessively vile, and there-›re not to be endured. . . . Accord-gly, what had been once done, and ›uld not be corrected, *he reluctantly ıdures*, but only in the common peo-e. For what was the remedy for those ho, under Judaism, had fallen into e snare of polygamy? Should they ıve divorced their second and third ives? Such a divorce would not have ›en free from doing wrong. Since, erefore, the deed was done, and could ›t be undone, he left it untouched, ıt with this exception, that no bishop ›ould be blemished by such a stain." Calvin's Commentary on Timothy, ıges 77 and 78). We believe this in-rpretation as given by John Calvin ıd a host of other commentators is ›rrect.

The question arises: Should not the hristian Reformed Church adopt the ıme attitude and practise with regard the matter of remarriage after an nbiblical divorce? We hold there sufficient evidence in the New Testa-ent to give an affirmative answer to ie above question. It is that evidence hich we deal with in this article.

We shall defend the following propo-tion: If a remarriage after an un-iblical divorce must be marked as dulterous, the church should not re-uire for membership that such union e disrupted by requiring the parties ıereof to cease to live in the ordinary ıarriage relationship.

There is a reason why we put this roposition in conditional form. The resent position of our church is that uch a marriage is a "living in con-inual adultery." The committee of ıe Synod of 1952, appointed to ex-mine the exegetical grounds for this osition, comes to the conclusion that uch is true. It also contends that there are no ethical involvements of ufficient weight to warrant a perpetu-tion of the sin of living in a marriage vhich is illegitimate in its very nature." Agenda of Synod, 1955, pages 113-34.) The meager Scriptural evidence roduced by the committee is not con-incing but even if it should be correct o characterize such a union as con-inual adultery, we must strongly dis-gree with the conclusion that separa-ion is demanded. We shall state our position and the Scripture on which it is based.

* * *

THE sinfulness of a re-marriage of unbiblically divorced parties is particularly in the contracting of it. It is not only the first act of sexual cohabitation that is adultery, but more so the speaking of the sacred vows of marriage. The person who has vowed to live in the holy bonds of marriage until death sins when he breaks those vows by an unbiblical divorce. He, in addition, commits a serious sin by speaking these same vows with another. Jesus, when speaking on this matter, mentions very specifically the marrying as being the adultery. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery," Matt. 19:9. The sex life that follows upon the vows is, no doubt, included in these words but to limit the interpretation to the sex act is not justified. Too much the argumentation has been on this order: the first act of sexual cohabitation is adultery; this first sinful act can never make the following acts sinless; therefore the marriage is a living in continual adultery. The issue is rather this: The being married — the speaking of the vows is sin. Is the staying married — the keeping of the vows (of which the sex life is but a part) also sin? Should a contract of this kind, sinful in its origin but now an accomplished fact, be kept? Should these sacred vows, once spoken, be honored? Should what the state has allowed and has done be permitted to continue? Or should the church seek to undo what has happened? May the church allow an adulterous union, if it be such, to continue? May, possibly, the church allow one who has been unfaithful now prove his faithfulness by being true to the vows of the second marriage?

The Committee of Synod, having arrived at the position that such a marriage is a living in continual adultery, concludes that, because the union is so sinful, nothing may stand in the way of disruption. But the committee presents no definite Scripture to maintain its position. We must disagree with that conclusion, it seems to me, for we find in Scripture evidence to justify the continuation of such a marriage. The church in the New Testament "reluctantly endured" certain situations which were not in principle right, but, because they existed, were allowed to continue. This New Testament practise has real bearing on our problem.

* * *

THERE is no book that posits higher standards and ideals than the Bible. It holds high the perfect law of love. From eternity to eternity that law stands. God, from the Garden of Eden to the Great White Throne, demands that we love him with our whole being and our neighbor as ourselves. Even though "the most holy in this life have but a small beginning of that righteousness" the absolute norm is never relaxed.

The high ideal of marriage is found early on the pages of Genesis. The failure to live up to it is condemned by the seventh commandment. "I hate putting away" God says when speaking about divorce in Mal. 2:16.

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament reaffirm the absolute standard which the Pharisees had circumvented in many ways. Jesus, on more than one occasion, amazes his hearers as he places before them the high demands of the law. "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished," and, "ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." In the same vein Peter reaffirms Leviticus when he states, "ye shall be holy; for I am holy."

Thus the New Testament also reaffirms the high standards of the law for marriage. The three Synoptic Gospels give the words of Jesus on divorce but it is only Matthew that adds the clause, "except for fornication." There can be no doubt that in all three the emphasis is on the ideal standard which was from the beginning; the exception, added in Matthew is secondary — added to give the complete picture. Jesus drove home the point that the ideal is one man and one woman united in marriage until death, and every divorce — no matter on what ground — is a violation of this standard. Mark and Luke can be understood best by this interpretation as well as the main teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19.

"Reluctantly Endured" — Continued

It is the task of the Church to proclaim this high and perfect law of God. It may never silence its voice on this score. When the Sanhedrin objects, the answer of the Church must be, "We must obey God rather than man." "Let us press on to perfection" is ever the goal.

* * *

YET this is not the whole of Scripture. When the Church faced sinners in the world it did not keep its doors shut until they had reached perfection in all relationships of life. No, even those who had but a small beginning of sanctification were welcomed as members. And when many, who were enmeshed in the moral disorders of the day, came to faith, it was not required of them to dissolve all such relationships before membership was granted. We make mention of three of these disorders — slavery, polygamy, and "mixed" marriages.

Slavery stands condemned in the light of God's perfect law. We quote what Prof. D. Kromminga wrote a few years ago in *The Banner* regarding slavery when answering a question on polygamy. He stated, "A similar situation exists with other institutions in the Old as well as in the New Testament. I am thinking of slavery. However, though it is impossible to quote chapter and text, yet it should be clear that the very genius of the gospel and the liberty of the children of God overthrows all human bondage and slavery. In like manner polygamy stands condemned by Scripture, though God in times of ignorance and because of sin-hardened hearts 'suffered' his people to practise it."

God "reluctantly endured" slavery in the New Testament as well as in the Old. Abraham had his many slaves but so also a Philemon, and Paul praises the latter for his Christian faith and love. Philemon is Paul's beloved and fellow-worker who has a church in his house. The Church for many centuries has endured this social disorder among its members. It did not ban by synodical edict those living in this evil.

Since John Calvin has already been quoted on the matter of polygamy little more, we trust, need be said. We add but one comment about the Old Testament practise. There God endured this evil not only in the common Israelite but also in their leaders. Abraham, Jacob, and David — types of the Christ and the highest officers in the Old Testament Church — were polygamists.

A third instance is that of mixed marriages. A believer marrying an unbeliever commits a very serious sin. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" applies to the most intimate union between human beings. Corinthian converts, feeling an incompatibility in the marriage union and inclined to separate, were urged by Paul to remain with the unbelieving spouses. Peter in his first letter gives similar advice.

In these three instances we have Biblical evidence to guide the Church today. If in the New Testament Church polygamy was "reluctantly endured;" if the believer was to remain married to the pagan unbeliever; and if a slaveholder could be held in high esteem in the church, then may not the church retain or receive as members those who have remarried after an unbiblical divorce, without requiring a separation? If there be a godly sorrow, a genuine repentance, and a sincere confession by those guilty of this sin, may not their disordered relationship be continued in view of the tremendous complications involved in separation?

That there are very serious complications is freely acknowledged. The Divorce Study Committee states (1955 Agenda, p. 126); "In some cases, particularly where the physical and spiritual nurture of dependent children is involved, these complications may be so weighty as to lead the parties involved to judge that they cannot agree to the demand for separation." And the admission is made. " . . . as seems to be the case there is no perfect solution to this problem." This statement reveals that the ethical involvements are so serious that, no matter what stand is taken, it will virtually be a choosing of the lesser of two evils. We question very seriously whether a position that requires homes to be broken up and makes bastards of children can be right. And would not a forced continence lay too heavy a burden upon many and often be in conflict with "it is better to marry than to burn"? To reluctantly allow the marriage to continue is, in our opinion, the lesser of two evils and in harmony with the practise of the early church.

* * *

IT MUST be particularly noted that both polygamy and mixed marriages are not only of the same kind as that of the divorced and remarried, but both are also more serious evils in just the point at issue. There is nothing abnormal about the married life itself of unbiblically divorced persons. The sin, if it is such, is because of past events. Such is not true of either polygamy or a mixed marriage. The living of one husband with two or more wives is a constant contradiction of the standard found in God's Word. The daily living together of believer with unbeliever is most abnormal for "what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness . . .?" (II Cor. 6:14). If then the greater social disorders are endured, it would seem the Church should do the same in the case of a lesser disorder.

It is significant that the practise of the Christian Reformed Church regarding mixed marriages has been one of toleration. Warnings are constantly made from pulpit and press. This is as it should be. At least two of our Synods have come close to adopting a testimonial on mixed marriages. But, as far as we know, there is little or no discipline exercised. Seldom is the one, guilty of this sin, asked to confess it before the consistory. No one has ever suggested that we must bar an individual from membership as long as he continues in this abnormal relationship because it would plainly contradict Scripture to do so. It is true the neglect of proper discipline in one case does not justify its neglect in another, but why should we have virtually no discipline for the greater evil and excommunication for the lesser? It is our conviction that mixed marriages are a greater and more prevalent evil in the Church than that of remarriage after an unbiblical divorce.

* * *

IT MAY be objected that the New Testament Church was forced to make allowances due to her origin in the

midst of paganism and that the church today must maintain higher standards. In answer I make the following observations:

1. It is true that the early church had to make allowances not needed today. The church in America does not need to tolerate polygamy or slavery for neither can exist in our social order.

2. It is true also that the Christian Church should so strive to promote society that the government would not permit unbiblical divorces and remarriages. But the facts are quite different. We are today confronted with a new paganism in which the moral integrity of marriage is disregarded. Our home missionaries face the problem constantly.

3. Bear in mind that the application of a principle may vary from time to time but the principle itself is true for the whole New Testament dispensation. If in the early church those "living in continual adultery" could be members of the Church, the same is true today. Requirements for church membership and entrance into heaven remain the same for all ages.

4. The early church, although enduring these social disorders, made great progress and the evils of polygamy and slavery have largely disappeared from Christendom. The early church did not by lowering the bars — as some might call it — lose out but rather gained greater victories. A similar practise in the Church today need not prevent it from making progress.

The status of the remarried after an unbiblical divorce very likely will be the most important issue before the coming synod. It must answer the question: What does Scripture say? It must test the exegetical foundation for the thesis that the marriage of any person who has obtained an unbiblical divorce is a living in continual adultery. The practise in the early church of reluctantly allowing certain social disorders should be considered, we believe, in arriving at the Biblical position. In the absence of direct statements this "analogia fidea" has real bearing on the problem.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

The Editors
The Reformed Journal

Sirs:

I have read with some interest the article of Mr. Oppewall in the October issue of the *Reformed Journal* on a comparison of American and Dutch schools. The article contains a rather severe indictment against our American secondary schools which, I believe, should not go unchallenged. As a principal of one of these secondary schools, I believe I can answer some of the charges and thus suggest a solution to the problem which will strike at its roots and not require as radical a reorganization as Mr. Oppewall suggests.

Our Christian high schools generally offer three courses of study comparable to the three schools of the Netherlands which Mr. Oppewall describes. We have our college preparatory course which is similar to the "gymnasium" of the fatherland. It may not require as many years of foreign languages as its Dutch counterpart, but it is a course which is imposed upon us by the colleges. Next we have our commercial course, comparable to the "H.B.S.," which trains students to take their places in the business world. In defense of this course any principal can provide for anyone interested testimonial upon testimonial from employers of our graduates that we are doing a good job. We are moving in the direction of broadening the offerings in this area so as to prepare for other vocations than office work. Our third course is a general course which can be compared to the "M.U.L.O." of which Mr. Oppewall speaks. Here we attempt to give to the student who does not intend to prepare for college, and who is not seeking a trade, an education which will make of him an intelligent citizen of his community and an active member of his church. Since this course generally attracts our less able students, we are perhaps doing our poorest job in this area.

Now what happens? We urge all our incoming students who intend to go to college to take the required college preparatory course. We even say, "If you do not take this course, you will not be admitted to college." His choice must be made on the tenth grade level, at the age of about fifteen, when he has no intention of going to college anyway, so he selects the commercial or general course. Upon graduation from high school, however, he decides that perhaps he had better go to college after all. It's the popular thing to do these days and his friends are going, so he comes in to see his principal or counsellor only to be told, "The colleges will not accept you without the college preparatory course and, besides, your high school record is such that no college will take you." So he makes application to the college of his choice (even Calvin) and is accepted. Then, when he is not qualified, the college instructor says there is something wrong with our high schools.

I have in my experience many cases on record in which I was asked to forward a transcript of credits to a college for a non-college preparatory student in the lower tenth of his class. Under "Comments" I have written "Not recommended for college" only to have this student accepted.

Recently I had an instructor from one of our Dutch high schools visit our school. He marvelled at the work we were doing in such college preparatory courses as biology, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. He even said that in some of these courses the work we did was superior to that done in the Netherlands. He felt that the range of subjects was not adequate but that again is a matter of what the college requires. If a change is to be made in the college preparatory course, all that is necessary is for the college to change its entrance requirements and the high schools will gladly oblige.

Now for a solution to the problem posed by Mr. Oppewall. Let colleges accept only students who are prepared for college by having followed the college preparatory course in high school. Let them accept of this group only those recommended by the high school faculty. Let them, if they will, require an entrance examination of students thus prepared and thus recommended, and let their entrance be determined by their success in this examination. If, then, the college finds these students inadequately prepared, the blame can be laid at the door of our high schools. This solution will require no radical reorganization on the high school level. It will, however, radically reduce college enrollment. This is necessary anyway if we are to maintain in our colleges the standards of yesteryear. The college professors who, because of the decreased enroll-

Letters to the Journal — Continued

ment would thus find themselves without a job, can help to relieve somewhat the deplorable shortage of teachers in our elementary and high schools at the present time.

Mr. Oppewall suggests a reorganization of our secondary school system to correspond with that in the Netherlands. As I understand his article, only those students who had completed the "gymnasium" course would, under his arrangement, be admitted to the University. All I ask, and I believe I am expressing the sentiment of all the Christian high school principals, is that the same system be followed as he suggests without this cumbersome reorganization. At least it's worth a try.

Gerrit De Vries

The Editors
The Reformed Journal

Gentlemen:

In the October 1955 issue of the *Reformed Journal* Peter Oppewall touches on a most important problem of Christian education: how better to educate our most gifted children. The seriousness of this problem is well described by Mr. Oppewall. He performed a service by pointing it out.

His solution is that of going back to the ideal of our Dutch forebearers, that of separate schools for superior students; to set up in our own school system the equivalent of the Dutch *gymnasium*, with a modified curriculum, but retaining its selectivity of students, its emphasis on languages and the classics, and its thoroughness.

While this is an obvious solution, it is not the *only* one, as Mr. Oppewall asserts. It is not my intention, however, to present a counter plan, nor to argue for or against *separate school plan*, nor to discuss the pros and cons of classical education. I only wish to bring to the reader's attention several highly interesting and instructive experiments in educating the superior student being carried on at present in this country.

In one of these plans capable students are given advanced college standing for college level work done in high school. In another program, bright youngsters are taken out of high school and given early admission into the colleges. New York city has had separate high schools in science, music and art for many years. Cleveland has held Major Work Classes for gifted children for twenty years. Recently, Portland, Oregon, has set up a program in gifted child education from kindergarten through high school.

My colleague Dr. Robert Havighurst and I reviewed and analyzed these projects in a recent survey of American programs for gifted children. This is published as an Educational Monograph by the University of Chicago Press. It seems to me that the most intelligent thing for us to do is to acquaint ourselves more thoroughly with a number of these programs in order to learn what we can from them.

If a drastic remedy is called for (and it seems to be) then it must be taken on the basis of thorough study. One way to accomplish such a study is for Calvin College or the National Union of Christian Schools to commission a group of representative Christian educators to study what others are doing to solve the problem. They can study for a year or so and make recommendations for our schools to follow.

Another important prior step is to study how the gifted students are faring in our own Christian schools, and what the attitude of Christian school administrators, teachers and parents is to their problems. Such a study would also need to be sponsored by Calvin College, NUCS, or some other Christian educational agency.

In short, Mr. Oppewall has delineated an important problem and proposed a particular remedy. I suggest that we not commit ourselves to a particular solution to the problem until we have at our command several alternative steps that might be taken. From these we can choose the one best suited to our needs.

Respectfully,

Robert DeHaan
Chicago, Illinois

The Editors
The Reformed Journal

Gentlemen:

As a former professional Scouter, kindly allow me space to express my appreciation to Dr. M. Eugene Osterhaven on his splendid article The Christian and the Boy Scouts of America published in the November issue of the *Journal*.

We parents are happy to learn something about the Boy Scouts in relation to our Reformed heritage from a theologian committed to that heritage and at the same time actively engaged as a volunteer worker in the Boy Scout Movement. The evaluation given by him is precisely what we so often lack in our relation to American society. Yes, why the fearful attitude of the American boys' world in which our own boys do share? Aren't they every day living and playing with boys of the community? In as much as the Boy Scouts units can be sponsored and leadership provided by our own churches, what harm can there be in our boys' association with one of the finest youth movements in American society? Let them have the advantages of an oudoors and character building program based on a long history of study and experience in boys' work.

Indeed, Dr. Osterhaven gives us much food for thought and reflection.

Respectfully,

John J. Dahm
Clifton, N. J.

December 29, 1955

Dear Editors:

Today the *Reformed Journal* came, and as times before I sat down to read it from cover to cover. It's always a welcomed periodical, because even as you yourself write it presents IDEAS. Not merely ideas to tickle the mind; rather ideas which will help us as believers to become more sanctified in the Truth and in our Christian walk of life. The *Journal* is a means to broaden our sympathies, to sensitize us as believers to the problems which confront the Church of Jesus Christ, and to aid us to become men thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

There is but one practical suggestion I wish to make. These brief biographies so ably written by Professor Vanden Bosch should be gathered into one small booklet to be sold to our membership at large. I would be happy to make my small contribution to see this wish realized.

May the Lord prosper *The Journal.*

Yours sincerely,

John H. Sietsema
New Holland, South Dakota